

REMARKS


This Preliminary Amendment amends the originally-filed specification and abstract of the above-referenced U.S. application to refer to and claim priority from Japanese Patent Application No. 2002-266534 filed on September 12, 2003, and from Japanese Patent Application No. 2003-155127 filed on May 30, 2003, pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.78(a)(2). In addition, the specification has been amended to remove minor informalities from the originally-filed application (enclosed herewith. A marked-up comparison documents between the originally-filed enclosed specification and the substitute specification is enclosed herewith. A separate sheet of the Abstract with all changes provided therein (in a clean form) is also enclosed herewith.

In addition, originally-filed claims 1-9 of this application have been canceled, without prejudice. New claims 10-18 have been added merely to conform now-canceled claims 1-9 to an appropriate form for prosecution before the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, and not due to any reason of patentability. Accordingly, claims 10-18 are now under consideration in the above-identified application. The amendments to the specification, as well as the new claims do not add new matter to the application.

Applicants assert that the present invention is new, non-obvious, and useful. Prompt consideration and allowance of the pending claims are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: September 12, 2003

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